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OUR SOLDIERS' DOCTRINE OF DEATH

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I

Our dead soldiers compel the world they saved, but have themselves lost, to seek the meaning of their death. Answers expressed in terms of their death's accomplishment or of its revelation of human worth leave us un comforted. Only if we can see in their dying an actual and permanent good for those who died will our hearts be appeased for the else unendurable glory of their sacrifice. Such an answer, if it can be won, enfolds all those at least who are of their spiritual kindred, affects all our other faiths and the whole end and art of living.

What answer have our soldiers themselves given? What did death mean to them? It is the American soldier whom Americans question, because we understand best the language of his deeds; while we recognize that whatever was great in his answer was shared by the soldiers of our allies, whom we include in one impartial sorrow, reverence, and hope.

Death did not mean to our soldiers the vastness commensurate with our pride and sorrow. They regarded dying as one incident among the incidents of war, one duty not essentially significant above other duties. This is our soldiers' doctrine of death: Death is one duty not essentially significant above other duties. Can a thought apparently so careless, of death as comparatively so slight a thing, disclose to the most deep and universal mourning of all time the assurance of an actual and permanent good for those who died that humanity might live?

The proof that this was their conviction may be gathered from their letters chosen at random, the testimonies of sympathetic observers, their general conversation and behavior; and the evidence holds good for all sorts and conditions, both officers and

men. To them death was all in the day's work. Reveille, inspection, drill, recreation, march, attack; sleet and sunshine, hunger and rations, filth and bath; shells, gas, nests of machine guns, games behind the lines; work of every kind, fighting under every test of endurance, resourcefulness, and daring; lying out wounded, going West—there appeared to them no radical distinction in any one part of their service above any other part. Officers to be obeyed, Fritzies to be beaten, nurses and Salvation Army lasses to thank God for, peasants and children to be tended; trench, open fighting, hospital, rest-camp, grave—everything was according to orders, everything was in the day's work, one indiscriminated duty in all that was to be done or endured.

It was not that they regarded death lightly: they took none of their intense experiences lightly. Least of all when they made a jest of them. Men must jest at that which cannot be borne without jesting. The faces restored to us are traced with most unyouthful lines; their eyes have seen that which no vision should be compelled to suffer. In their merging of dying with other things to be overcome there is no bravado, indifference, suppression of any essential of manhood.

When we speak of their indiscriminate regard for duty, dying or other, we are not to think of their doing what they had to do because of abstract principle. Duty was to them the present act that was due. Any consideration beyond this their directness laughed to scorn, as when the army's amateur preachers exhorted them to be mindful of principle. The deed that was then to be done they needed not to remove into any general category, from which to derive back a sense of obligation. The morality is as weak as the philosophy is shallow which separates the inspiring sanctity of any deed from the deed itself into something transcendent of the very deed, whether the transcendence be called duty, God, Christ, or whatever. If these, duty, God, Christ, are not concrete in the deed they exist not anywhere. It is in this vital sense of duty that our boys regarded death as not essentially significant above other duties.

II

Their doctrine is not ours. If it were, all our thought concerning them would have been revolutionized. Then our mourning, while it might not be less, would have a different quality. It is their death which occupies us, overwhelms us as different from all else, threatening sometimes to obliterate all else. Their attitude almost affronts our love. So irreparable a disaster to us is the loss of them that we feel they wronged us not to take the loss more heavily, as if they flung upon us the burden. Did it mean no more to them to leave us, when it cost us the light out of the sky?

When such stress of grief, wearing itself out for a while, passes into the nervous fret that our dead were not in all respects as we would have wished them to be, we are tempted to resent the absence in them of sensibilities which we had attributed to the soldier fighting and dying in a great cause. Our own sentiments are wounded by their mere tolerance of the elegiac poetry and music that bring swift tears to our civilian eyes. They preferred "Over There." We may allege their reflective poets, like Seeger. But the genius of these men won few responses from our soldiers. Such aesthetic failing is relieved by their indifference or mirth over sentimental tributes to their devotion. There was little of that romanticism which, envisaging the last great enemy in his terror and majesty, exultantly greets him as a friend. Nor did there often appear the debonair behavior in death's presence as of the young Parisian warriors of *Les Misérables*. The survivors may become gradually affected by our feelings toward the fallen, just as an audience of Grand Army veterans sometimes weeps when the orator of Memorial Day mourns unto them. But in their lodge meeting afterward they revert to their accustomed soldierly attitude, which is that of our boys who return from the front, or remain forever there.

It was not—may it be said again—that these young men were hardened against death. Their hearty comradery was not indifferent to it when their mates fell beside them. Of all men they seemed human, sanely sensitive, as they exulted over letters from home and sweethearts, fed little children, warmed the terror out of them, and taught them how to play again. They were not insensible

to the essential goodness of life, to the German bestiality they fought down, to the universe of suffering they redeemed, to the grief of home folks learning that it had been our last look of them when we saw them march away. They did not try to put out of mind the threat that ever companioned them. The arithmetically gifted calculated the chances of survival, more or less favorable according to the situation, and imparted the results of their science to those less accomplished. But every quality of theirs is so subordinate to their indiscriminating soldierly duty, which refuses to consider dying as essentially significant above other duties, that our sentiments seem alien to them, fail to get the range of them. The feelings implicit in their doctrine of death are so different from what was expected by those who never waited for the poison gas sweeping down the east wind, nor in the training-camp made body and soul athletic for hard-won victory.

Their doctrine offends our religious doctrine—rather, our religious sentiment. At most times indeed we were accustomed to put death out of mind and to attend exclusively to this world's business and pleasure, but when we had occasion to think of it we required of ourselves a fitting solemnity. But their religious advisers testify, with varied feelings, to the general absence in our soldiers of any emphasis at least upon the customary religious thoughts connected with dissolution. The Catholic soldiers accepted as a matter of course the dogmas of the church on this subject as on all others, but their wise chaplains, trained really to know real men, gave little instruction in this tenet. Of the other soldiers, mostly unchurchly, few argued that death ends all. If an exhorter should intimate the possibility of any dead comrade going to Hell, this was insult irretrievable, blasphemy that has never forgiveness. That such a thought insulted and blasphemed God was not the cause of their indignation. This is something different from a religious conception as commonly understood. Not from sources so various and vague came the power of their ultimate devotion. They did not dwell upon the celestial glory appropriate to the supreme courage and the final sacrifice.

For what is death, my friends, that I should fear it!
To die? Why, 'tis to triumph, 'tis to join—

Such lines sound incongruous applied to them. It is the lack of what seems to us the religious consciousness which perplexes us most in those whom we long to reverence according to the measure of our grateful love. We try to attribute to them our own attempts at faith, which must be, one would infer, deepened and intensified in them by the terrific facts they faced, faith in God and immortality, and all the transcendencies by which we supposed the greatest things must be won.

And yet may it not be possible that their seeming unfaith is faith different but far from inferior to that which we consider desirable? These common men, with common men's standards uncommonly disciplined and energized—have they perhaps been lifted into moral imperatives which make them our guides in the deep things of the soul? Is our soldiers' doctrine, of death conceived as one duty not essentially significant above other duties, a clearer unfolding of that which is implicit in death?

III

Our soldiers' doctrine, like every other, must be understood genetically. Its immediate origin is the military discipline of the Allied armies. For it is military discipline that makes soldiers, and these men became completely soldiers. Though the sources of this their faith are traceable to the genius of free people, consciousness of participation in the cause of world-wide liberty, indignation against crimes whose forms were learned from the crassest savagery and whose spirit is of a degeneracy unprecedented, and to reverent compassion for those whose sufferings, estimated by the moral worth of the sufferers, were from outrages unparalleled, yet all these forces were made consummately practical in the military discipline which directly formed our soldiers both in action and in conviction.

This discipline, thus realized, makes everything required of the soldier a duty absolute, a categorical imperative, from cleaning up camp to cleaning up a world, from the first "Fall in!" to the last "Let's go!" All sorts of men came into the training-camp, the clean and the polluted, the unregulated and the self-controlled, yet with a general readiness to do what might be required of them.

Military discipline laid its hand upon them all, in every moment of their service, their leaves of absence not excepted. If the soldier will give himself up to the molding of this all-pervasive law, well. If he will not, compulsion is instant and severe. But never did compulsion, even in its severest and rarest forms, in cases when our army's principle of discipline ceased to apply to the offender in order that it might apply to the rest, stop short of its purpose to make the hearts of our soldiers one with inviolable law. This discipline is very jealous of any motive not implicit in itself. Officers did not preach it: that would be to deny it. It wisely excluded from the camp all professional preachers of every creed who had not been trained in its strictness. Unwise, as the event has proved, was the admittance of amateur exhorters. "What is the sense," remonstrated a Christian officer, "of talking all sorts of Christian motives to these men to persuade them to do what military discipline requires them to do!" Here was no disparagement of Christian motives, but the recognition of them in their effective unity. He spoke the sentiment of his men. It was not that the conventional moral and religious appeals were too high for their comprehension; they went wide of our soldiers' position. It was the military discipline, with no adventitious aid, which held them and led them till a soldier's duty became incarnate in them. His duty, kneaded into him till it was he! Nothing less than that in the first eccentric wanderings of the awkward squad; nothing higher than that along blind paths of death through Argonne Forest to November 11 at Sedan.

The distinction between this principle of military discipline and that of Germany is none the less important for not being obvious. In both, the purpose of army training is "to win battles." In both, absolute and instant obedience as a second nature is demanded, with heavy penalties inflicted upon any approach to insubordination, even "to reason why." Yet there are indications, on the surface, of a fundamental difference. One of these is the initial superiority of the German army as a fighting machine. There was an automatic carrying out of orders, invaluable when it does not destroy other soldierly qualities. There was again the attitude of German officers toward their men, not different indeed

in demanding and enforcing obedience, but in the superman assumption, which excluded the mutual sense of equality of duty in him who commanded and in him who obeyed. There was also the difference which has been most remarked, the successful effort in our army for individual intelligence of response and initiative, "the instinctive calling into play of all the faculties upon command." "Superiors will direct their subordinates what to do, not how to do it." These chief differences, of free though no less obedient action as against mechanical action, of the consciousness of moral unity in officers and men as against the relation of master and slave, and of the development of the whole efficient manhood as against its suppression, point to the fundamental distinction, of free moral obedience which is duty, in the one case, and of servitude and compulsion in the other. It is a question, not of the comparative amount of courage, but of its moral quality, in which indeed practical effectiveness is at length seen to be involved. The higher soldierliness is by no means denied to all German soldiers: there are souls that keep essential moral freedom under any external servitude. But we have only to try to transfer in fancy our soldiers to the German ranks, to perceive the essential disparity between our enemies and those who, enlisting freely or as members of a nation that enlisted freely, found in the service nothing that did not lead them on to free manhood fulfilled in duty.

IV

Thus did our boys learn that duty is greater than dying, and that, if dying is required, it is the duty that gives worth to death. This recognition of what our soldiers became removes the temptation of excessive, indiscriminate, or sentimental praise. They were young men with all the frailties of ordinary young manhood, who had sinned as young men sin, many of them grossly and frequently. They were exposed in camp to contaminations which no military discipline could extirpate. They were flung into a strife whose immediate object, however holy the ultimate purpose, was to kill. Let all such allegations be admitted, even with the addition of ignorant or malicious charges unproved or even disproved; none the less there had been implanted in them by the

military discipline of the higher type the supremacy of duty as making even the suffering of death its incident, and just that duty became their directive purpose, their essential being. A recreant few were among them but not of them. The delinquents indicate by their moral separateness that the attainment of the vast majority was the free choice of self-determining man. In the almost integral ranks some gained more slowly than the rest the comprehension of the requirement. Some of these were in subsidiary work, some were conscripted late in the war, but the backward ones were on their way. Some erred more, some less, from standards to which they continually returned. Devotion to a soldier's duty, in this case man's highest obligation, affected in different degrees the speech and action, the feeling and thought, which did not belong directly to their duties as soldiers; but the permeating power of that devotion is revealed, among other instances, by their rare magnanimity to the conquered enemy and by their gentleness to those whom he had outraged. All the failings, frankly acknowledged, throw into relief the essential attainment. We rightly attribute to one making the supreme sacrifice that which he proves himself to be in the most searching test, though his essential character surges up from unsuspected depths. But in our soldiers we have more than that: not a momentary moral ecstasy, but a full-formed, abiding quality, evidenced in their entire service of living and dying.

Many of our soldiers will not continue to be in peace altogether what they were in war, unless the ethical history of mankind shall attain a new stage more suddenly than we can hope. There will be reactions, many of them temporary, some permanent, from a moral overstrain, excitements of the lower nature will often be substituted for the stress of war, and from these reactions our soldiers will be judged by critics superficial, cynical, and pharisaical. They exchange a society permeated at every moment by duty, for one which has discovered no sufficient moral discipline. Their duty had a social object, humanity, concretely served; they return to an environment where individualism is prevalent, where success is still to the multitude the outstripping of one's fellows, happiness the gratification of self-regarding desires,

industry a blind struggle toward economic democracy by undemocratic ways and motives, and religion the saving of one's own soul. In so sudden a transition character may be impaired before the adjustment is completed. Demoralizing disappointment awaits many in the closing or checking of civilian careers which had been successfully begun, in the loss of former industrial opportunities, often usurped by the less worthy. The wounded, the exhausted, the physical wrecks of men, will be tried by fearful tests of soul. The returning soldiers will feel resentments, some just, some not entirely justified, against their country's insufficient gratitude or its misdirected efforts to meet the economic difficulties involved. Sentimental laudation will be followed by neglect, excitement over their return by popular absorption in the next excitement. It will be a long and pregnant story of solicitations to an unforming of their soldierliness. Yet though in many cases the strength may be unflexed which made them truest of true soldiers, multitudes will remain in their deepest life that which they proved themselves to be, not at one moment only but through interminable endurances, not in a single act but in the consistent course of the duty that gives value to the final deed. Our hope for an environment of adequate social discipline, for a constructively revolutionized industrialism, for religion that returns at last to Jesus' sacrificial gospel, rests largely upon the inalienable quality wrought out in our soldiers. This hope is reinforced by those historic effects, clearly traceable from Marathon down, which other ennobling wars have impressed upon the soldiers engaged in them, and upon the nations into which their heroes infused the power of their own devotion.

When we ask, To what or to whom was the duty paid? we seem to encounter limitations of our praise. Duties, to cite the traditional classification, are divided into those owed to ourselves, those owed to our fellow-men, and those owed to God. Of the first and third of these compartments our soldiers had little recognition, unless indeed they force us to new meanings of both terms. In regard to the first, it is one of the most significant facts of the Great War that individual appeals fell on stony ground. Exhortations to chastity and sobriety as duties owed to self-respect were

notoriously repudiated by the cleanest-living multitude of men ever assembled. The same duties laid down by officers as necessary to army discipline and efficiency were respectfully received and loyally obeyed. The individual as such was not an object of moral interest. Even greater impatience was manifested toward self-regarding motives of conduct, such as Heaven, or the advantages and satisfactions of a righteous life. These men had been plunged into a social unity and effort where the individual is nothing, save as by losing himself he finds himself in the humanity he lives for and dies for, humanity not conceived as mass or abstraction, but as fellow-men in whom each man suffers and rejoices and overcomes. Therefore this apparent limitation in the objects of duty is the removal of a limitation. It is the formation of the social man, in whom all the universal elements of ethical personality rise into new significance and power.

Of duties owed to God they seemed to take little thought. Admonitions to "get right with God," to "give their hearts to Christ and follow Him," were for the most part met with indifference or ridicule from men whose lives were given to the supreme right, and whose faces were set steadfastly toward Calvary. Exhortations to an emotionally mystical religious experience, labeled conversion, incited rather than repressed the flagrant profanity of camp and battle. Apologies may be indulgently offered for profanity in a life of such stress and strangeness that ordinary speech is not sufficient to express it, and it is almost compelled to borrow from the highest realms of reverence and the lowest depths of infamy. War cannot be expected to refine the speech of those accustomed to curse in civil life. But apologies for what we indeed deplore become less urgent when we reflect that the God they swore by is not the Supremacy they served. The divine names connoted to them the tradition of a being who is apart from that to which they gave their lives. They never cursed in the name of flag or country or their great cause. It is a question too extensive for the limits of this discussion, whether religion must not seek God, no longer where our traditions have sought him, but where these soldiers found him—whether the all-inclusive object of their undifferentiated duty is not God as the supreme cause we

fight for, infinite and eternal, in immanent leadership, in consummate sacrifice unfolding into perfect victory.

In this socializing experience duties owed to self and duties owed to God were thus lost and found again in duties owed to one's fellow-men. This disciplinary process was as concrete as implicitly universal. They were initiated into the squad, that innermost circle of the great fraternity, that eightfold expansion and concentration of personality. The squad was in and for the company, in which the discipline of obedience was incarnated. The company was for the regiment, the preciousness of whose honor obliterated the preciousness of individual life. The regiment was for the larger unifications, of the division, of the army, of enlisted country, of the armed international alliance, of sufferers to be set at liberty, of the endangered world to be redeemed, of the great cause which is our soldier's deity, than whom there is no God higher and holier, whose outpourings of power sweep back through all those organized self-renunciations, even to the simplest and intensest of them. This process and attainment needed not to be formulated: it was felt. It needed not to be clearly felt: it was lived.

But there must be a deeper reason for what our soldiers were, beneath that of a military discipline necessarily similar to the German in form and immediate purpose, but, as we have seen, alien in fundamental principle. Though men are not to be judged in the mass, yet judgment upon men individually must be completed by estimating them in and by their organizations. This estimate applies to nations, thence to their armies, enabling us rightly to evaluate both our own soldiers and those of our allies, and their spirit of undifferentiated duty in all that they had to do.

A great Belgian author has recently emphasized the distinction between the spirit of a nation and the characters of the individual members of that nation, fraternally instancing the immaculate glory of the soul of France in distinction from whatever frailty and incompleteness are humanly inevitable to her citizens. But may it not be questioned with all deference whether this noble view does not contain an element too mystical or conceptual? Where shall the soul of France be sought except in the citizens of France, who together are France, not indeed as isolated units to be

summarized, but as interblending personalities? The French tradition and ideal have their existence in her citizens. Each soul in France forms itself from other sources of growing personality, and each imparts itself to others, toward the continuous formation of France and humanity, of France first, thence of her allies. The glorious soul of France is formed in and from concrete persons so possessed by the same moral purpose that this possession has become the essential of them, mighty to subdue the remainders of the baser nature, and they infuse this essential character into their fellows, till the nation as a spiritual completeness of united persons is permeated with it, and it becomes national that it may become universal. What is true of France is true of those nations which are, we rightly say, one with her in heart and soul.

Now in an army, national or of nations allied in a great cause, the process works most freely and completely. For an army must be made a unity by military discipline, and the quality of that discipline is determined by what the nation demands. We are therefore justified in a profound reverence for the individual soldiers generally of our army and our allies. Whatever in them remains unsubdued to the pervasive finer quality, yet that high thing has become in concrete reality their essential character.

But is there anything in their moral attainment which makes them ethical supermen? Would not men generally, if exposed to the forces which molded these soldiers, have done precisely what they did, and in their spirit? When we trace to its origin their doctrine of death as loyalty to the all-embracing duty that ennobles death as it glorifies all else they did and suffered, and find that it is the effect of a military discipline that springs from the spirit of an illumined nation, we feel ourselves in the presence of a power that is mighty to subdue all men unto itself. Our soldiers insist that there is not in any part of their service anything unexpected or exceptional, anything above the reach of other men. "Of course I done it," a soldier remonstrates against his praise; "who wouldn't 'a' done it?" Certainly that which is most deeply universal in humanity has realized itself in them. They are what all men are meant to be. They are what all men who have not sold their human birthright are implicitly. Their claim to possess and fulfil the

universal human is their right to the deepest, highest praise, which they demand in proud self-abnegation, knowing themselves wronged and humanity, which is their essential being, wronged if just this praise is denied or obscured. This universal human worth which they fulfilled brings them closest to us, as they arouse in us our lowliest, manliest response to that which is most simply human. There is nothing too great to be expected of common manhood.

Duty is often regarded as a relatively inferior moral conception, though not so regarded by plain men, to whom it connotes the highest things. But the greatness of the conception depends upon the greatness of that to which the duty responds and the spiritual wealth which the duty brings to the performance of its task. When rendered to the great cause of humanity and God it is filled with the supreme purpose, embraces all spiritual ends, and reveals itself as perfect freedom. Yet at its height of heights it is safeguarded against sentimentalism, assumption of superiority, introspective self-satisfaction. In Gethsemane, on the cross, the devotion of the holiest to the holiest is still the humble dutifulness of doing the Father's will.

V

Our soldiers' doctrine of death is that death is a duty not essentially significant above other duties. When this view has been contrasted with conventional sentiments, its genesis and development traced, its moral value estimated, and its spiritual significance recognized, then the question comes back upon us with increased intensity: Does anything in this conviction disclose to the most deep and universal mourning of all time the assurance of an actual and permanent good for those who died that humanity might live? The problem of the future life has immensity when asked concerning any man. When urged in behalf of one who is loved, its poignancy obliterates every other question. When the beloved life that has gone rejoiced with youth's vitality in the universe which the mortal senses know, there is indignant remonstrance against the whole visible and tangible universe which excludes from itself the possibility of a future life dissevered from the senses. Pile upon these heights the immeasurable gratitude for that which these deaths have

brought us, and multiply the immensity, the poignancy, the remonstrance, the baffled gratitude, by the millions upon millions of our dead, and did ever such agonizing importunity knock at the unreverberating portals of the hereafter?

What material for an answer is offered by our soldiers' doctrine of death? Their conviction that death is a duty not significant above other duties makes death incidental to life when life is the performance of duty, and nothing less than that is worthy the name of life. Thus they stand opposed to the two doctrines of death that have mainly expressed, or at least formulated, the general expectation of mankind. One of these is that death is finality. "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." The other, so far as it is a hope and not a dread, is that death is a transfer into the traditional Heaven of reward, where faith is exchanged for sight, conflict for victory, effort for rest, sacrifice for an unsacrificial blessedness eternal. Many orthodox hymns may be quoted as the statement of this doctrine. The worth of these two doctrines consists largely in the repugnance which each holds against the other, the ground of which in either case is the dim consciousness of a faith denied by each equally. Each involves failure to estimate life's supreme quality.

The chief goods of the brighter of these two expectations are not faith, conflict, effort, sacrifice, but their opposites conceived as rewards for the ennoblements of life which are at length to be laid aside. Holiness and love are indeed promised, but as gifts conferred, and thus devoid of character achieved and maintained. Though there is often mingled with this hope, consciously or unconsciously, the different conviction which makes death incidental to unconquerable life, yet the two faiths are essentially separate, and one of our most important tasks is to keep the higher uncontaminate from the lower. Also the higher faith includes participation in the divine blessedness and demands the perfecting of all things, but from a different basis of affirmation and in an opposed conception. Even when the traditional hope emphasizes the vision and worship of God, vision and worship are separated from a service whose essential is sacrifice to the uttermost—separate, that is, from the very essential of the moral and spiritual life taught by Jesus. The

religion of Jesus, in this hope, ceases at the gate of Heaven. The Crucified becomes our leader into the opposite of that which we love him for, and of that which we trust him to enable us to achieve in our innermost life, for which there would remain "no work nor device nor knowledge nor wisdom" in the Heaven whither thou goest.

This hope of Heaven is based upon our fond desires. We long for that which we never attain in this world, or attaining lose, and so we dream of fruitions of hope under fairer skies. We long for surcease of pain, sorrow, disappointment, and, having to endure them while life lasts, we are comforted by the thought that at death the burdens shall be rolled away. Above all, our weariness longs for rest. Disillusion conceiving a remoter hope belongs to a small and ignoble part of life and is alien to life's manlier joys and victories. Its foundation is as insecure as all longings for happiness prove themselves to be. Even if we base this faith upon a good God whose pity will offer us relief at last, such a faith in God, which is common, is itself founded upon the same ungratified desires. It is significant that this faith lapses easily into its apparent contradiction, the expectation of the finality of death. For we cannot really gain assurance that what we vainly long for here shall be given us elsewhere, still less that the gift can afford us satisfaction, or be therefore aught else than an eternal burden intolerable. Our expectation is beset with fears on either hand, fears that it may be false and fears lest it may be true. Therefore the hope tends to contract itself into the longing of our weariness for nothing else than rest, which any consciousness would render incomplete. To some hearers the soul-shattering pathos of the Manzoni *Requiem* sings at its "dying fall" not hope but renunciation, as its "Requies Eterna" sinks our beloved into oblivion.

The rejection of this hope on ethical and spiritual grounds is not inconsistent with sympathy for it as the dream of the oppressed, as it was the consolation of America's negro slaves, whose spiritual songs are full of it. One cannot refuse the relief of opium to intolerable pain, though the medicine has no curative value and is pernicious save for exceptional need; nor does the failure of a positive moral and spiritual worth in the traditional expectation

deny a comparative moral value. It is better to dream of such a Heaven than to sink into sensuality, the alternate recourse for a life of sordid helplessness, though frequently both reliefs are used by the same pitiful person. Yet even so, to recognize something above the sensual may be the first step toward the spiritual. This hope of Heaven is at any rate a hope, and hope is better than despair or insensibility. "And if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it," and patience is the inalienable virtue of the helpless. The conditions prescribed for the realization of this hope are partly ethical, though generally accompanied by the superstitions and moral deadenings imposed by an ecclesiasticism whose most potent weapon is this very hope of Heaven, with its obverse, the dread of Hell; yet the ethical conditions are impaired by the unethical aim and nature of external reward. It would be a desperate world if the great host of the very poor, the war-stricken, the outraged, were limited to this hope.

But even the halting apologies for the traditional view of the hereafter fall away whenever a man has a real life to live in the world and in the development of his own soul and the soul of humanity. Then it is no longer possible to wait for a Heaven that is to be given, in a waiting which accomplishes nothing for the improvement of the conditions of life nor for the development of life itself, one's own life in and for humanity's life. The faith based upon fond longings is recognized by soldierly men and women as hostile to progress, ineffective against evil. It is no ground of censure that popular movements for social reforms, whatever their other excellencies or defects, often repudiate this hope of Heaven and the God of this hope, as opposed to that which is right and useful in their cause; and there is no reason for censure that a religion with the same traditions found little access to our soldiers fighting and dying in a great cause, nor to men who possess their spirit. If the hope is still held traditionally, as a creed, it is yet distinct from manhood, and its falling away is so inevitable as to be often unconscious.

Our soldiers' doctrine of death may be seen to be equally opposed to the acceptance of death as a finality. Whether they expected

immortality is not the question; we have not undertaken to discover their conceptions of the hereafter. The contention is simply that the acceptance of death as a duty not essentially different from other duties will be found to be vitally opposed to the view that death ends all.

The denial of a future life has various causes. It may be the conclusion to which many intellectual men felt themselves forced—that the relation of the physical and the mental, roughly termed body and soul, is such that the dissolution of the former marks the cessation of the latter. Yet even when the case seemed most desperate for soul, the terrific facts could not quite pronounce our doom. For they encountered even then the possibility of a miracle of re-creation in a realm beyond the world of science, which excludes such possibility only from itself. But we are not now driven from the face of investigation and thought into the merely possible inconceivable. Recent closer examination of facts and deeper estimates of them leave the question open. There is no fact known to us which closes the discussion, and, as a study of our soldiers' faith will make clear, there can be none.

The denial of immortality may have grounds debased or excellent. The brute knows nothing above the brutal. And though the brute may speak with man's voice and think with man's mind, and though he imagines his brutish gratifications extended through eternity, yet his implicit consciousness is that the end of the material is the end of all. No answer is due him, whether he blazons abroad or dissembles his blasphemy of the human soul, except the opposition of men who by doing their duty even unto death have silenced such blasphemies forever.

But the denial has often nobler motives. It is frequently the rejection of an immortality founded upon mere hope and longing because these expectations have no basis of assurance, and also because they are morally unworthy and distract from or deny the ethical tasks of present living. In a justified repulsion from the traditional hope of Heaven, in the disclaiming of reward for toil and sacrifice when the reward both as reward and in its contents offers something infinitely below the intrinsic worth of toil and sacrifice, a rapidly increasing army of servants of humanity live without

hope, that they may the more earnestly live with God in the world. This denial of the traditional hope is often held not positively but agnostically, and in multitudinous instances more is the working creed of those who are absorbed in the present world of present service without concern for what may be beyond. In them is the destruction of the ancient longing for a life deprived of life's manlier elements. In them is largely the power of the affirmation wrought by our soldiers' deeds. For those who have given themselves to sacrificial service hold implicitly two great faiths in one: the first, that their life is in its nature above material things, and the second, that the ends of their toil and conflict have permanent significance.

The finality of death is the denial of all that such men hold dear, when they reach the complete estimate of achieving, self-sacrificing life. There is indeed a greatness of soul in working without hope of reward here or hereafter. But when this self-abnegation is seen to annihilate the very magnanimity that originated it—for when life is gone then its quality is gone—a personal hope appears which is directed to nothing else than the continuance of the devoted life. This moral demand grows clearer when one thinks of other men, for then any admixture of self-centered desire obscuring the sacrificial nature of the immortal life that unselfish service demands is removed. It is all but impossible to think that everything attained by our soldiers' devotion must forever be to them as if it had never been. They would indeed have advanced none the less steadily, though into nothingness, from the same motive which impelled the fulfilment of every other obligation, for they had been disciplined to do every duty without regard to consequences. And this inconsiderateness of what might be beyond death increases the difficulty of supposing that the universe is false to them, the true. And yet any one of them might say, "Let me perish if only that which I died for continues to bless other men; let me die utterly that the world may live." But those they served unto the uttermost are included in their fate. Though the redemption which our soldiers wrought should for ages bring forth and expand every mortal good even beyond the dreams of the *Prometheus Unbound*, yet these countless billions of happy men would drop into nothingness, until finally

throughout the lifeless earth and under the extinguished sky all the fruits of the ages grown upon our soldiers' graves would be as if they had never been. Whether a universe external to men's best selves, or a God separate from men's sacrificial service, would accept our remonstrance to such an annihilation of men's devotion, supposing such a universe or such a God to exist, is not at this point the question. The assertion is simply that men to whom death is one duty not essentially distinguished from other duties have that in them which denies that death is finality.

Our soldiers' formulation of the faith which was their life is of little concern. Their possession of the life to which death is but an incident reinforces, by all they were and all they did and all they gave, that vital faith in the hereafter which is alone possible to devotion becoming conscious of its own nature.

This life is rightly called the life of the spirit. The phrase suggests an infinite universe distinct in its nature, though capable of subduing to itself all that which manifests itself to sense and which mind may re-create from sense, as the immeasurable spaces and the innumerable stars and all that these contain. The spiritual universe calls us to an inexhaustible exploration of its nature and to searching distinctions of itself from all that which it is not, and to the relations by which it is to make the other its instrument. Yet it is present and possessed whenever an element of life declares itself as underived from anything in that other. Such a possession is in even the simplest duty. Whoever gains duty by unqualified obedience to it, whoever accepts the unconditioned "ought" of any demand, has entered that spiritual universe to which "the heavens are a tent to dwell in." To him who lives this life, though in the slightest and faintest beginnings, which yet impart the infinite, death is incidental. For no material process can check that which is unconditioned by it, nor affect more than the outward manifestations of that which is of a different nature. This life is eternal by its very being. Itself and its eternity cannot indeed be demonstrated by anything lower than itself, would be disproved if it could be. It therefore accepts the title of life of faith, for faith is its essential—faith in its own implicit nature, faith in the infinite and eternal immanent in it, wherein it lives and moves and has its being.

Its ONGOINGS can never forsake its inalienable elements of faith, effort, devotion, sacrifice. Denying death as finality, it equally denies that dream of the hereafter which is based upon ungratified longings and disillusioned hopes. It is this life whose appeal is reinforced by all that our soldiers were and did and gave, in their conviction that dying is one duty not essentially significant above other duties, that death is an incident in the life of duty. To our appreciation of this life they have also contributed two elements, essential but hitherto obscured.

Our soldiers have brought the life of the spirit, with eternity in its heart, within the reach of common men and common hours. This life has been too much associated with exceptional souls and exceptional experiences. It suggests vision, mysticism, ecstasy, raptures of prayer; the Buddhas attaining Nirvana; Plato "using the beauties of earth as steps along which he mounts to that other beauty, absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting," with which are identified the true and the good; Plotinus' ecstasy, violently grasping integration with the Infinite; raptures of the ages of faith; spiritualized romanticism piercing through the forms of things to the invisible; Paul caught up into Paradise; the five hundred brethren kneeling before the heavenly glory of their risen Master; the early church waiting for the coming of God's Son from Heaven, where their citizenship is, and their hidden life, dead to the world. Spiritual life, founded upon such models, requires temperamental gifts, allotted to the few, and obliterated, except to the elect among these few, by the incessant demands of physical existence. This spirituality is the privilege of an aristocracy. Or the spiritual may be sought in sublime heroisms, martyrdoms of every world-conquering faith, up to the prayer of Gethsemane and the triumphant agony of the cross. Opportunity for these heroic spiritualities is not granted to most men.

Our soldiers' conviction that death is a duty not essentially different from other duties emphasizes the spirituality universally attainable. For duty is, as we have reflected, one essential element at least of the spiritual universe as distinguished from the lower order, and one which is unconditioned and unchecked by that lower. They so recognized the supernal power of duty that even the utmost

heroism and devotion has its worth to them only in its identification with the commonest tasks of the soldier's life. And these tasks are one with all common tasks, for the same duty in all makes them all one. Duty was conceived by them more vitally and therefore more spiritually than by the world's great teacher Kant, evangelist of the moral law. Enfranchising it from the categorical abstractness and conceptualism by which he was limited, they made it purposeful in its attainment of supreme ends for humanity, and therefore a life of faith in God's great cause in which He energizes. They revealed its spiritual almightiness against the centralized powers of Hell. And this spirituality they made appealing to all men by its compassionate ministries to the broken-hearted and by the beauty of their devoted youth. Subordinating to duty their last full measure of devotion, they made its least instance in human life glorious with the glory of their final overcoming of the world. By making death an incident of duty's sacrificial life they have revealed to every man who does a plain man's duty the fulness of the spirit, the certainty of the eternal. For common men feel that they have not the gifts, the culture, or the opportunities for the spiritual life whose usual offer so bewilders them. The answer which every minister of the spiritual life hears repeatedly from plain men is this: "We just do the best we can," or "the best we know." How often have we seen them turning unresponsively from the message tinged with churchly mysticism and, following them to their tasks, have found our assumptions of spirituality put to shame by a plain man's duty plainly done. The completeness and the commonness of duty, which in every doing of it is not essentially different from a soldier's dying that men might live, not essentially different from Jesus' dying that men might live, this is our soldiers' evangel, this is the offer of faith, spirituality, eternity, for every task, to every man.

Here is the assurance of hope for the brotherhood of sorrow, so multiplied by terrible initiations in these incredible years. Not to sink under pain and wrong, consoling ourselves with a passive longing, but to conquer in our own souls and to do our utmost to subdue conditions to the soul's demand—this life of duty achieves duty's inalienable and immortal possession.

This soldierly evangel both criticizes and appreciates the spirituality of exceptional men and exceptional hours. Such experiences may be nothing more than hypnotisms, auto-suggestions, nervous overstrains, flights of fancy, self-delusions. Or they may be the concentration of a devoted life upon its center, its source of power. "By their fruits ye shall know them," by their reinforcements or depletions of moral strength in the daily conflict and service, where their quality is both tested and realized, whether or not they are fountainheads of power to irrigate our fields of toil. Or if the spiritual is sought in world-conquering heroism such deeds are culminations. They grow from a daily life of world-conquering spirituality. The highest of them is but one duty not essentially significant above any other duty. In the undistinguished duty are implicit the vision of God, the fellowship of the cross, the power of the life eternal.

The spiritual life to which death is but an incident incurs also the danger of an individualism which vitiates its essential nature. From the distractions of men's thronging toils and pleasures the soul that longs to know itself in its underlying life, its reality, turns to solitude; from the tumult of the crowd it is led up into the wilderness. In loneliness and quietness are unveiled its deep discoveries, are wrought its vast self-realizations. God meets his prophets in the wilderness. But there is the temptation of the wilderness, to separate the spiritual achievement from the life we live with and in and through our fellow-men. Then the spiritual is counterfeited in a deadlier egoism, and the way to the unsocial Hell diverges at the very gate of the Celestial City. The victory of spirituality against its most intimate enemy is seen in Jesus rejecting the suggested isolations of power, mastery, and dominion, that he might impart the spiritual Heaven of his divine sonship to all the family of which he is the elder brother, and add to all that God could impart to him every manifestation and presence of the divine in men and in the universal divine life which sweeps through humanity.

Our soldiers' life of duty, to which death is an incident, because death is but one duty not essentially significant above any other, was a social life. The eternity which it bears in its heart was theirs because they implicitly sought to unite with themselves every soul

for which they lived and died. They identified themselves with the interblending life of that spiritual universe which we rightly call humanity. And this they did by their sacrificial service, for souls become one eternally in the giving and receiving wrought by sacrifice.

Thus the spiritual life eternal has its clear and appealing revelation in those common men, to whom death, being one duty not essentially significant above any other duty, became an incident in the eternal spiritual life which duty demonstrated. And this undying life they cleared of the misconceptions to which it is liable and which can pervert its nature, by the realization of it as a life accessible to common experience, and as social in its essence, guided to social ends and fulfilled in sacrifice.

Death but an incident! But death is the loss of the physical universe. Death has severed them from earth and all its voices, from the stars and all their splendors, and from everything in thought, feeling, and purpose whose field and object is the world of sense. Yet before the face of duty the earth and the heaven shall flee away, and the life of duty shall feel no loss, no essential difference. Whether the spiritual life shall fling off its vesture or creatively change it for another, it has in either case the assurance of all it needs for infinite self-realization and eternal service. There shall be discoveries and experiences for which mortal speech has no language, mortal thought no conception. But these can be nothing else than unfoldings of the spiritual life which is manifest in every duty.

Death but an incident, only one duty not essentially significant above any other! Why, our hearts remonstrate, they in dying gave nothing less than youth's consciousness of limitless strength and joy, that by their death the world might live! Is there not all heroism, all devotion, all glorious sacrifice, in their dying? Yes; and the unconscious greatness of their creed announces, as with the voice of the many waters of the infinite deep, that nothing less than the supernal splendor of the death they died is in every commonest duty of their service and ours, since each duty has the essential of the spiritual life, the presence of the eternal.